

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for selecting a scoring mechanism from a plurality scoring mechanisms for processing queries, comprising the steps of:

for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, determining, based on a query, multiple parameter values for the scoring mechanism, wherein each parameter value of said multiple parameter values indicates a different characteristic associated with using said scoring mechanism for processing said query;

for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, generating a score based on the multiple parameter values determined for the scoring mechanism; and

selecting which scoring mechanism to use to process said query based on the score generated for each scoring system;

wherein said query is a query received by a search mechanism and one of said multiple parameter values is a density of sponsored product items parameter value and the density of sponsored product items parameter value is determined based on a percentage of sponsored product items in a result set that would be generated for said query for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, wherein a sponsored product item is a particular product item for which a party associated with the particular product item will or has been charged a fee for each inclusion of a reference to said particular product item in results provided by said search mechanism, and

wherein a product item is selected from the group consisting of a merchant, a product offering, and a product abstraction.

2. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the multiple parameters values comprise a relevance parameter that reflects the relevance of results that would be produced by the scoring mechanism for said query, density of sponsored product items within results that would be produced by using the scoring mechanism to process said query, and a user retention parameter that estimates the likelihood that a user that issued said query will find the results useful.
3. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the multiple parameter values comprise a relevance parameter value and the relevance parameter value is determined for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms by having a human grade the results produced by each scoring mechanism for one or more sample queries.
4. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining a relevance parameter value for each scoring mechanism for each category of a plurality of product item categories, wherein each product item category of the plurality of product item categories is selected from the group consisting of a product category, a merchant category, and a product abstraction category.
5. (cancelled)
6. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein one of the multiple parameter values is a density of sponsored product items parameter value and the density of sponsored product items parameter value is determined based on potential revenue that would be generated by

using the result set that would be produced for said query by using each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms.

7. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said query is a query received by a search mechanism and one of the multiple parameter values is a user retention parameter value generated for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms and the user retention parameter value is generated for the scoring mechanism based on a percentage of users that return to a website associated with said search mechanism within a predetermined time span after receiving results generated by the scoring mechanism.

8. (currently amended) A method for selecting a scoring mechanism from a plurality of scoring mechanisms for processing queries, comprising the steps of:

for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, determining, based on a query, multiple parameter values for the scoring mechanism, wherein each parameter value of said multiple parameter values indicates a different characteristic associated with using said scoring mechanism for processing said query;

for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, generating a score based on the multiple parameter values determined for the scoring mechanism; and

selecting which scoring mechanism to use to process said query based on the score generated for each scoring system;

~~The method of Claim 1,~~ wherein said query is received by a search mechanism associated with a website, wherein the method further comprises the steps of:
placing a cookie on a user's computer;

recording for each scoring mechanism of the plurality of scoring mechanisms when the scoring mechanism is selected for use on a user query for the user;

determining whether the user has returned to the website based on whether the cookie is on the user's computer; and

calculating a user retention parameter value for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms based on a percentage of users that have returned to the website within a predetermined time span after using the scoring mechanism, and wherein the user retention parameter value is one of the multiple parameter values.

9. (currently amended) A method for selecting a scoring mechanism from a plurality of scoring mechanisms for processing queries, comprising the steps of:

for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, determining, based on a query, multiple parameter values for the scoring mechanism, wherein each parameter value of said multiple parameter values indicates a different characteristic associated with using said scoring mechanism for processing said query;

for each scoring mechanism of said plurality of scoring mechanisms, generating a score based on the multiple parameter values determined for the scoring mechanism; and

selecting which scoring mechanism to use to process said query based on the score generated for each scoring system;

~~The method of Claim 1,~~ wherein said query is received by a search mechanism associated with a website, wherein the method further comprises the steps of:
logging a user into a server;

recording for each scoring mechanism of the plurality of scoring mechanisms
when the scoring mechanism is selected for use on a user query for the
user;
determining whether the user has returned to the website based on a history for
the user; and
calculating a user retention parameter value for each scoring mechanism of
said plurality of scoring mechanisms based on a percentage of users
that have returned to the website within a predetermined time span
after using the scoring mechanism, and wherein the user retention
parameter value is one of the multiple parameter values.

10. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of selecting a scoring mechanism from said plurality of scoring mechanisms comprises performing a functional composition of the parameter values wherein the functional composition is selected from the group consisting of a product of parameter values and a product of squares of parameter values.

11. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 1.

12. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 2.

13. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 3.

14. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 4.

15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 6.

17. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 7.

18. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 8.

19. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 9.

20. (currently amended) A machine-readable storage medium ~~carrying~~ storing one or more sequences of instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 10.